

CIPHER.

By STANLEY J. WEYMANN

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On the 15th of August, 1901, returning from a mission to England, I sailed from Dover, and crossing to Calais without mishap anticipated with pleasure the king's satisfaction when he should hear the result of my embassy, and learn from my mouth the just and friendly sentiments which Queen Elizabeth entertained toward him.

Unfortunately I was not able to impart these on the instant. During my absence a trifling matter had carried the king to Dieppe, whence his anxiety on the queen's account, who was shortly to be brought to bed, led him to take the road to Paris. He sent word to me to follow him, but necessarily some days elapsed before we met; an opportunity of which his enemies were quick to take advantage, and that so insidiously and with so much success as to imperil not my reputation only, but his happiness.

The time at his disposal was increased by the fact that when I reached the arsenal I found the Louvre vacant, the queen, who lay at Fontainebleau, having summoned the king thither. Ferret, his secretary, however, awaiting me with a letter, in which he expressed his desire to see me, made me nevertheless stay in Paris a day to transact some business.

"Then," he continued, "come to me, my friend, and we will discuss the matter of which you know. In the meantime send me your papers by Ferret, who will give you a receipt for them."

Suspecting no danger in a course which was usual enough, I hastened to comply. Summoning Maignan, who, whenever I traveled, carried my portfolio, I unlocked it, and emptying its contents on a table, handed them in detail to Ferret. Presently, to my astonishment, I found that one, and this the most important, was missing. I was obliged for the moment to resign myself to the loss, and again, and yet again. Still it was not to be found.

Whenever I traveled on a mission of importance I wrote my dispatches in one of the three modes, according as they were of little, of great, or of the highest importance; in ordinary characters, in a cipher, or in a cipher in which only the king and I held keys. This last, as it was seldom used, was rarely changed, and I had, accordingly, on my return from each mission, immediately to remit my key to the king, who deposited it in a safe place until another occasion for its use arose.

It was this key which was missing. I had been accustomed to carry it in the portfolio with the other papers, but in a sealed envelope which I wrote and again sealed with my own signet whenever I had occasion to use the cipher. I had last seen the envelope at Calais, in the direction of the portfolio before beginning my journey to Paris; the portfolio had not since been opened, yet the sealed paper was missing.

More than a little uneasy, I recalled Maignan, who had withdrawn after delivering up his charge. "You rascal!" I said with some heat. "Has this been out of your custody?"

"The key?" he answered, looking at it. Then his face changed. "You have cut your finger, my lord," he said.

I had cut it slightly in unbuckling the portfolio, and a drop or two of blood had fallen on the papers. He had seen the envelope at Calais, in the direction of the portfolio before beginning my journey to Paris; the portfolio had not since been opened, yet the sealed paper was missing.

"I have no key, your excellency," he said. "That was true; and as I had at bottom the utmost confidence in his fidelity, I pursued the inquiry no farther in the direction, but made a third search among the papers. This also failing to bring the packet to light, and Ferret being in haste to depart, I was obliged for the moment to put up with the loss, and draw what comfort I could from the reflection that no dispatch in the missing cipher was extant.

I handed them in detail to Ferret. Whoever had stolen it, therefore, another could be substituted in its place, and no one the wiser. Still I was unwilling that the king should hear of the loss of the key, and I had made it my duty to inform him of it at this moment, when my mind was full of my loss, and even more of my suspicions. "Silence!" I said, "I have no key, your excellency."

When the secretary who readily assented, had given me his receipt and gone, I questioned Maignan afresh and more closely, but with no result. He had not seen me place the key in the portfolio at Calais, and that I had done so I could vouch only by my own memory, which I knew to be fallible. In the meantime, though the chance seemed small, I made it my duty to place the key in the portfolio at Calais, and that I had done so I could vouch only by my own memory, which I knew to be fallible.

Twenty-four hours later, however, I was rudely awakened. A courier arrived from Henry, and, surprised to find me, he handed me an order to attend his majesty; an order couched in the most absolute and imperative terms, and lacking all those friendly expressions which the king never failed to use when he wrote to me. A misgiving so brief and formal—and no needless, for I was on the point of starting—did not reach me for years; and coming at this moment, it had all the appearance of a thunderbolt in a clear sky. I stood stunned, the words which I was dictating to my secretary dying on my lips. For I knew the king, and I knew that he experienced his kindness too lately to attribute the harshness of the order to chance or forgetfulness; and I knew that he was in a mood to face with a grave crisis, I found myself hard put to it to hide my feelings from those about me.

"Send Henry," I said, "with all speed, and, sending for the courier, asked him with an assumption of carelessness what was the latest news at court. His answer, in a measure, calmed my fears, though it could not remove them. He reported that the queen had been taken ill—or so the rumor went.

"This morning," he answered. "The king was with her?"

"Yes, your excellency, and he was with her when he left her, when he sent this letter."

"It came from her chamber, your excellency?"

"But—did you understand that her majesty was in danger?" I asked.

"As to that, however, the rumor would not say anything, and I was left to turn my conjectures during the long ride to Fontainebleau, where we arrived in the cool of the evening, the last stage of the journey being uneventful, and the post passengers that combined to win the disorder and apprehension which had my spirits. Discouraged in my journey, I found a fresh surprise awaiting me.

ing me in the shape of M. de Concini, the Italian, who, advancing to meet me before my foot was out of the stirrup, announced that he came from the king, who desired my instant attendance in the queen's closet. Knowing Concini to be one of those whose influence with her majesty had more than once tempted the king to the most violent measures against her—from which I had with difficulty dissuaded him—I assured the king of the choice of such a messenger; and, wounded alike in my pride and the affection in which I held the king, could scarcely find words in which to ask him if the queen was ill.

"Indisposed, my lord," he replied, carelessly. And he began to whistle. I told him that I would remove my boots at once, and in five minutes he was at his service.

"Pardon me," he said, "my orders are strict, and they are to request you to attend his majesty immediately. He expected you an hour ago."

I was thunderstruck at this—at the message, and at the man's manner; and for a moment I could scarcely restrain my indignation. Fortunately the habit of self-control came to my aid in time, and I restrained myself, therefore, with signifying my assent by a nod, and followed him toward the queen's apartments.

In the antechamber were several persons, who, as I passed, saluted me with an air of shyness and incertitude which was enough of itself to put me on my guard. Concini attended me to the door of the chamber; there he fell back, and M. de Concini, who was waiting, assumed serene countenance, and found the king and queen together, no other person being present. The queen was lying at length on a couch, while Henry, seated on a stool at her feet, seemed to be engaged in soothing and reassuring her. On my entrance, he broke

her, I looked about for one. I found that all the seats except one very low stool had been removed from the room. This was so like her that it did not astonish me, and I walked toward the door, leaning against the wall. "This is no ordinary honor—from M. de Rosny!" she said, frowning me with her eyes.

"Mercy!" she exclaimed in a mocking tone. "I should have put on new ribbons for the honor of my presence."

"From the king, madame," I continued, "when he saw that I was not intended for her; and on the instant it awoke all her former suspicions."

"This was a home question, and Henry, who never showed to less advantage than when he stood between two women, cast a sheepish glance at me. Unfortunately the queen caught the look, which was not intended for her; and on the instant it awoke all her former suspicions."

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sun was not yet high and the trees sheltered the longest I had ridden in my life. When the roofs of the chateau at length appeared before us, I could scarcely believe my eyes. How beautiful, how Mme. de Verneuil had overreached herself, and how, by indulging in that last stroke of arrogance, she had placed the secret in my hands. How much I had to refrain from going to the king booted and unbooted as I was, and though I had not eaten since the previous evening.

However the habit of propriety, which no man may lightly neglect, came to my aid. I made my toilet, and having broken my fast standing, hastened to the court, where I found the king was in the queen's garden, and, directing my steps thither, found him walking with my colleagues. A number of the courtiers were standing on the low terrace watching them, while a second group lounged about the queen's staircase. Full of the news which I had for the king, I crossed the terrace, taking no particular heed of any one, but greeting such as came in my way in my usual fashion. At the edge of the terrace I paused a moment before descending the three steps; and at the same time my eyes met, on the instant he averted his gaze, and turning on his heel in a marked way, walked slowly to the farther end of the walk.

The action was so deliberate that I could not doubt he meant to slight me; and I paused a moment to restrain my grief and indignation. A mark for all those glances and whispered gibes in which courtiers indulge on such occasions. The sight was a sad one, and I walked on with my head bowed, and my eyes met, on the instant he averted his gaze, and turning on his heel in a marked way, walked slowly to the farther end of the walk.

"Mercy!" she exclaimed. "I am not intended for her," she said, "but I am not intended for her; and on the instant it awoke all her former suspicions."

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High of all in Leavening Power.—Latest U.S. Gov't Report

Leavening Power

ABSOLUTELY PURE

USED TO BE HIS WIFE.

A Matter-of-Fact View of a Serious Situation.

From the Memphis Avalanche.

I sat in the sheriff's office talking with him about a man in his charge who was to be hanged three days later, when a woman was announced, and in walked a female who had passed fifty. Her face was wrinkled, her hair thin and white and her voice seemed to come out of a red as she asked: "Have you got a man in this yere prison named Thomas Jackson?"

"Yes'm," remarked the official. "Did he kill somebody about three months ago?"

"He did, ma'am."

"And has he bin tried for murder and sentenced to be hung?"

"He is, el?" she queried as she took a pipe from her pocket and proceeded to fill and light. "Ar' yo' the man who is goin' to hang him?"

"Very well, indeed, ma'am. I think he will die like a man."

"He will, eh? Well, that's more'n he ever done. I hope he might nigh cry."

"Are you a relative?"

"Used to be his wife, but done left him. Yaws, lived with Tom for sixteen yars."

"You have come to say farewell to him?"

"No, sir. I'm on my way to Collinsville, and thought I'd jest run in for a minute to see him, but you kin say I called."

"Yes'm."

"Yes'm."

"Yes'm."

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